



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

**COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT**

Feb. 10, 2021

Dear City Councilmembers:

I am writing in support of the letter sent to the City Council by the Seattle Human Rights Commission and the Seattle LGBTQ Commission, demanding the Council use subpoena powers to convene a special investigation into the Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers - at least six, at last count - who may have been involved in the far-right violence in Washington DC on January 6.

To date, there has been no accountability or transparency from either the Mayor's office or from the SPD about these officers, who traveled 3,000 miles to Washington DC to participate in a rally that was an attempt to overthrow a democratic election, a rally led by the far right and fascist elements that led to widespread destruction and the deaths of five people at the US Capitol.

Working people and community members in our city need answers to many questions:

- Were SPD officers encouraged to attend, and by whom? Did SPD management know in advance that officers would be participating?
- Which officers participated in the events of January 6, and what are their records using violence in the past? Have they been accused of excessive use of force in the past, and what happened to those investigations? What "Crowd Control" Weapons did they use during the Justice for George Floyd Protests, and other Black Lives Matter protests?
- To what extent does the culture within SPD permit or encourage white nationalist extremism?
- What specific actions have Mayor Durkan and the SPD executive leadership taken since January 6 to address systemic problems within the department?

**The public deserves answers that can only come from an open, public, and transparent investigation, and I am absolutely confident that no Office of Police Accountability (OPA) investigation will accomplish that.** While acting SPD Chief Adrian Diaz referred the six police officers to the OPA, most of them have still not even been publicly identified. Most importantly, the OPA investigators are themselves mostly experienced police officers, and the past record of investigations by OPA of officer misconduct is dismal, to say the least.

I urge Councilpresident González to convene a special public hearing to compel testimony and records from the Seattle Police Department. **To be credible, this must be an open public hearing, with the public given the ability to ask questions of witnesses and review subpoenaed documents independently.** As the Commissions noted, the Seattle City Council,

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under [Article IV, Section 4 of the Seattle City Charter](#) has the “authority to compel attendance of witnesses as well as production of papers and things pertinent to business before it or any of its committees.”

I applaud and thank the members of the Seattle Human Rights Commission and the Seattle LGBTQ Commission, who on February 2 called on the City Council to exercise its legal authority to investigate the police and compel members of the SPD to appear at a public hearing. The commissioners are absolutely right to point out that the involvement of so many SPD officers on January 6 demonstrates a systemic “culture of supremacy and impunity within SPD which tolerates or fosters white nationalism.”

Working people, especially communities of color, have no faith in the police investigating themselves in secrecy. That is why the City Council must conduct a public investigation, using the investigatory powers and authority it has been granted by the Seattle City Charter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Sawant', with a stylized, cursive script.

Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant